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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 000246

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2014

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SUBJECT: PA WORKS TO LIMIT HAMAS CONTROL OF SHIPMENTS

REF: JERUSALEM 221

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Transportation contacts reported that the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Egyptian authorities are working to prevent Hamas from confiscating Arab-donated shipments of humanitarian supplies in Gaza. Contacts said that more than 1,000 truckloads of donations to the PA are waiting to enter Gaza from Egypt. UNRWA has agreed to accept some of the donations for its programs in Gaza. PA authorities have not allowed Arab donations to enter Gaza since January 22, due to concerns about possible Hamas confiscation, but UNRWA acceptance of these donations may facilitate their entry. End summary.

PA seeks to prevent Hamas
control of aid deliveries

¶2. (C) Several Arab governments and Red Crescent societies donated humanitarian supplies to Gazans in response to IDF operations in Gaza. These donations were to move from Egypt to Israel (via al-Auja/Nitsana crossing) and then into Gaza (via the Kerem Shalom crossing), beginning in early January. Palestinian trucking contractors at the Gaza crossings told Econoff that the PA stopped authorizing these shipments on January 22, after reports that Hamas gunmen confiscated tens of truckloads of Arab donations. (Local press reported Hamas "hijackings" of shipments in Gaza on January 19-20.) Hamas reportedly claimed that these donations were for the Hamas-controlled "government" in Gaza - not the PA. PA, Egyptian, and Israeli authorities have not permitted any of the estimated 1,000 truckloads of Arab donations to be transferred into Gaza since January 22, and the donations remain in Egypt, according to our contacts.

Reported PA-UNRWA agreement

¶3. (C) According to UNRWA, the PA and UNRWA agreed on February 2 to transfer the Arab donations to UNRWA for distribution through its relief programs in Gaza. Transportation contractors said that UNRWA-contracted trucks began to pick-up the Arab donations on February 4 at Kerem Shalom and will deliver them to UNRWA warehouses in Gaza City. The PA will pay for delivery of Arab donations from al-Auja/Nitsana to Kerem Shalom, while UNRWA will cover the costs of distribution inside Gaza.

¶4. (C) Transportation contacts said that the PA is working to ensure that Hamas does not take credit for the distribution of these 1,000 truckloads of Arab donations. UNRWA contacts stated that the agency must maintain its neutrality in the PA/Hamas rivalry to avoid putting

Gaza-based staff at risk.

15. (C) Palestinian trucking contractors said that five truckloads of Arab donations were moved from Al-Auja/Nitsana crossing to Kerem Shalom on February 4. This was the first such shipment since January 22. UNRWA confirmed that it had accepted five truckloads of flour February 4 from the Egyptian Red Crescent Society. UNRWA contacts noted that the agency will not accept all of the Arab donations, as some goods are not applicable to UNRWA's programs. Transport contacts claimed that the remaining 1,000 truckloads should begin to flow from Egypt into Gaza via Kerem Shalom at a rate of 40 truckloads/day, unless gunmen attempt to confiscate the shipments.

Rafah Crossing Closed for Cargo

16. (C) OCHA contacts reported on February 5 that Rafah crossing was closed for cargo. Palestinian contractors in Gaza said that urgent supplies, which were stockpiled on the Egyptian side of Rafah, have all entered Gaza, so there is no need to keep Rafah open for cargo. Rafah will remain open to restricted pedestrian traffic, according to our contacts.
WALLES